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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PARIS 001862

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SUBJECT: SUDAN: NAFIE FAILS TO IMPRESS FRENCH, WHO HAVE NO
INTENTION OF RELAXING THEIR SUDAN POLICY

Classified By: Deputy Political Counselor Andrew Young, 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During his October 6 Paris meetings, Sudanese Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie failed to convince French officials that Sudan had made progress in areas of concern that would warrant a shift in France's position, according to MFA desk officer Frederic Bouvier. The Sudanese delegation, despite a friendly and even jocular manner, used specious logic in claiming that Sudan was now cooperating with respect to Darfur, UNAMID, political reconciliation, and relations with Chad. Nafie stated firmly that Sudan would never cooperate with the ICC over the two Sudanese already under indictment. The French told the Sudanese that they had made no significant change in behavior and could expect nothing from the French based on the claims Nafie was making, with Foreign Minister Kouchner at several points wondering how the Sudanese "had the nerve" to say what they were saying. The French have no plans to continue dialogue with the Sudanese, although they would take note of any genuine significant shift in Sudanese policy. The French will devote some attention to the Qatar dialogue on Sudan, if only to prevent it from spinning in a negative direction.

END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) MFA Sudan desk officer Frederic Bouvier on October 7 provided a readout on Sudanese Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie's October 6 meetings in Paris, with Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and, separately, at the French President (with Secretary-General Claude Gueant and Presidential Deputy Diplomatic Advisor Bruno Joubert). Bouvier said the substance of both meetings was identical. Nafie left Paris the morning of October 7, after giving a press conference at the Press Club of France (see para 11 below).

¶3. (C) Bouvier said that, in overall terms, the Sudanese utterly failed to show any meaningful change in their behavior. France was in no way inclined to change its views toward Sudan or to agree to a more lenient stance toward Sudan on any issue as a result of Nafie's consultation. Before addressing individual issues, Bouvier remarked that the Sudanese were quite relaxed, exuded self-confidence, and seemed quite assured of the course they were taking. They even tried to joke around with the French, who were not receptive. Bouvier said that the French launched into the discussion by asking directly whether Sudan had changed its policies regarding five issues: (1) cooperation with the ICC with respect to the two Sudanese officials under indictment and more generally; (2) violence in Darfur; (3) cooperation with UNAMID; (4) political dialogue with Sudanese oppositionists and rebels; and (5) Chad.

ICC

¶4. (C) Bouvier said the French judged Nafie disingenuous on the ICC. First, FM Kouchner observed that Sudan seemed to be taking a contradictory position -- on the one hand, Khartoum refused to recognize the ICC, but then was asking for Article 16 relief regarding a possible indictment of President Bashir. Nafie then said that Sudan did not recognize the ICC and was not seeking Article 16 relief. However, if Sudan's Arab League and African Union friends thought, in the name of justice, that an Article 16 suspension was warranted, Sudan could hardly object. Bouvier said that when Nafie said this, Kouchner uttered the first of several "quel culot" comments (roughly, "what nerve" or "what gall"). The Sudanese then said that they would examine the cases of the two ICC indictees, but through the prism of Sudanese law, and if prosecution under Sudanese law seemed in order, would consider prosecuting them. When the French suggested that such a prosecution be coordinated with the ICC to obtain ICC approval, Nafie said that Sudan would never cooperate with the ICC, would never turn any Sudanese over to the ICC, and would never coordinate any prosecution with the ICC. Bouvier said that Nafie's attitude towards the ICC alone was enough to rule out any shift in France's position.

Violence in Darfur

¶5. (C) Bouvier said the Sudanese were equally disingenuous in discussing violence in Darfur and the international community's demands that Sudan do more to eliminate violence. Nafie said that "violence" in Darfur had ceased a short while previously, after the Kalma incident. Bouvier said

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that Nafie, with a straight face, said that any Sudanese soldiers deployed in the area who might be engaged in a skirmish here and there were only "protecting UNAMID and NGO elements." Bouvier said that the French did not find this assertion credible.

UNAMID

¶6. (C) Nafie claimed that cooperation with UNAMID was improving due to Sudan's current policy of accommodation. He claimed that issues such as the Thai and Nepalese contingents had been resolved through Sudan's cooperative attitude. However, Nafie went on to say that it seemed that the UN was having its own troubles and delays in deploying and that Sudan could hardly be blamed for that. Bouvier acknowledged to us that this was "somewhat" true, but he reported that Kouchner, in response, shot back that UN deployment was slow in large part because of all the obstacles Sudan had set forth in the first place. Here again, the French found Nafie seriously lacking credibility.

Political Dialogue

¶7. (C) Nafie claimed that Khartoum was always willing to engage with its political opponents and with rebel elements but that the opposition and the rebels never seemed to want to engage with Khartoum. While this might be true, Bouvier observed, Nafie said nothing that would suggest that Khartoum was actively seeking or encouraging any sort of meaningful political dialogue.

Chad: Nafie Offers Nothing

¶8. (C) Bouvier said that, as might be expected, Nafie stated that Sudan would cease supporting Chad's rebels when Chad ceased supporting Sudan's rebels, and suggested that it was incumbent on N'Djamena to take the first step. That position, Bouvier observed, absolved Khartoum of any responsibility to do anything, yet allowed it to say that Sudan was the willing party. In short, Nafie offered nothing.

French Reaction: No Intention to Change Hard-Line Policy

¶9. (C) Bouvier said that Kouchner told the Sudanese quite directly that they had failed to impress the French or to make a case that France or any other interested party should change its position with respect to Sudan. "They really didn't show us anything, and we have no intention of changing our policy or doing anything that would suggest more flexibility toward Sudan," Bouvier said, "especially with respect to Sudan's problems with the ICC." He found Nafie's performance a bit difficult to understand -- Nafie seemed self-confident and made his presentation calmly without nervousness. Yet, what he had to say was completely and transparently disingenuous. "They displayed a strange combination of arrogance, cynicism, and an absurd degree of self-assurance that we would actually buy their bizarre arguments," Bouvier continued. "It's obvious to us that they've decided to take this to the extreme and make no concessions. Is it possible that they can't see the corner they're putting themselves in?" Asked about next steps, Bouvier said that perhaps the Sudanese had slammed shut the small window of opportunity that had appeared with the possible ICC indictment of Bashir. "Maybe we've gone as far down this road as we could. They are the ones that are closing this phase." Bouvier said that France had no intention of continuing the dialogue, although the original proposition -- if Sudanese behavior improves in significant ways France and others could modify their policies -- remained on the table.

Qatar

¶10. (C) Bouvier said that France was devoting some attention to the Qatar talks on Sudan, if only to prevent them from going in the wrong direction, given French concerns about Qatar's aims. Bouvier said that the MFA had named Issa Maraut, who has been involved in Sudan-related activities for a while, as French envoy for the Qatar talks.

Press Conference

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¶11. (SBU) Bouvier noted that Nafie held a press conference on October 7 before leaving Paris. French news magazine l'Express reports the conference at its website, www.lexpress.fr, entitling the article "Langue de Bois Sudanaise" (i.e., "canned language devoid of meaning"). We have e-mailed the article to the various Sudan-related e-mail collectives. At the press conference, Nafie repeated many of the things he told the French, claiming to be cooperative and feigning indignation at the accusations levied against Sudan.

MFA Statement

¶12. (U) The MFA on October 7 issued the following statement on the Nafie visit (informal Embassy translation):

BEGIN TEXT:

-- Mr. Bernard Kouchner received, on October 6, a Sudanese delegation led by Mr. Nafie Ali Nafie, Counselor to President Bashir.

-- The Minister of Foreign and European Affairs made clear France's extreme concern over the degradation of the situation in Darfur, notably the continuation of violence. He asked that the Sudanese authorities put an end to the operations they have been conducting for several weeks.

-- He reiterated the call for a radical and immediate change in policy on the part of Sudanese authorities:

---- one the one hand, to cooperate with the ICC, with the aim of implementing the decisions already taken with respect

to Messrs. Harun and Kushayb;

---- on the other hand, to take all necessary measures to progress toward a resolution of the crisis in Darfur, with respect to the cessation of hostilities, access of humanitarian workers to the civil population, the deployment without hindrance of UNAMID, the search for a political solution, and the normalization of relations with Chad.

-- The Minister indicated that, concerning all these matters, France was waiting for action.

END TEXT.

STAPLETON